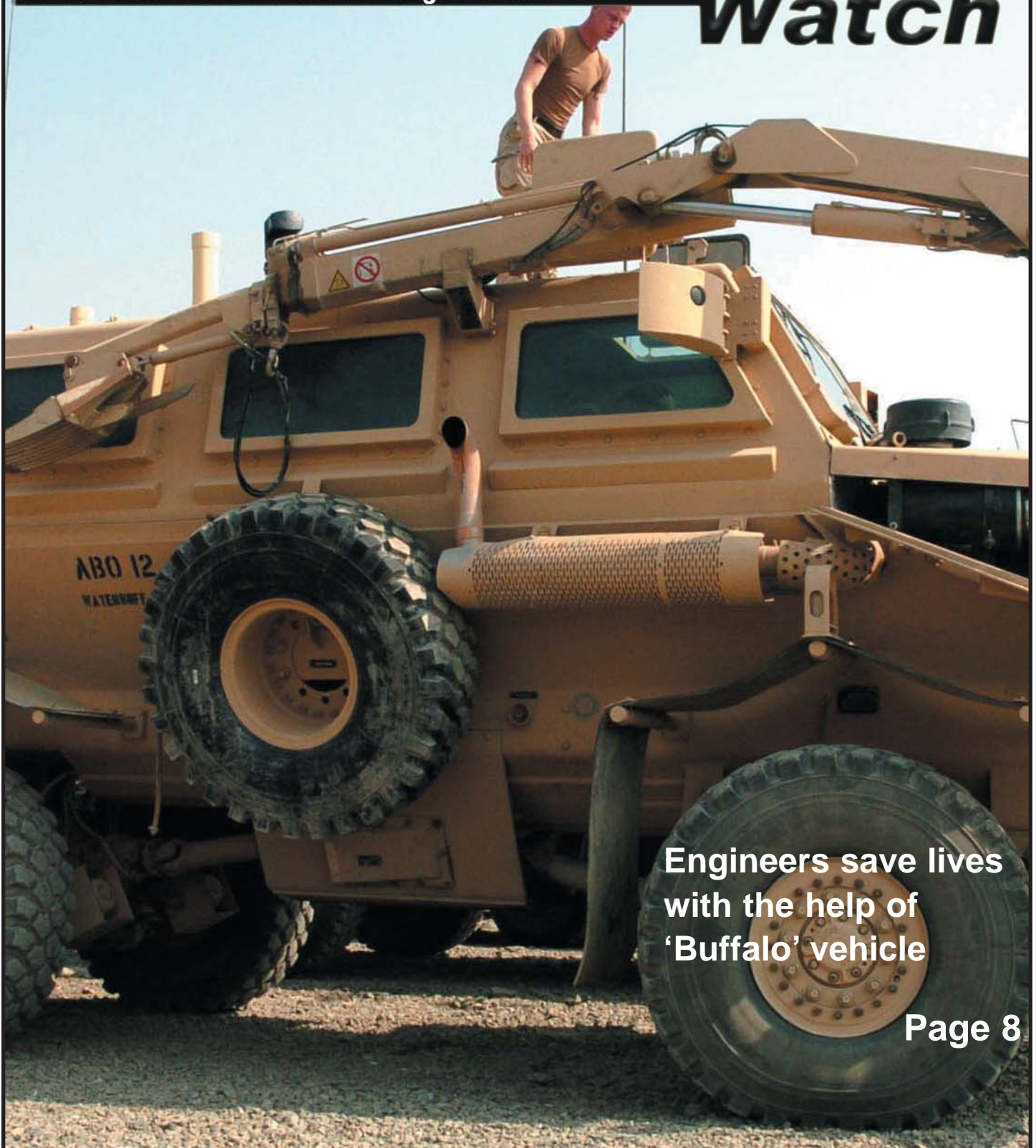


# Afghanistan **Freedom** Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan **Watch**

November 28, 2005



Engineers save lives  
with the help of  
'Buffalo' vehicle

Page 8





An Afghan National Army soldier with the 4th Kandak, 2nd Division, helps to build a tent platform at Camp Wolverine in Zabul Province for the winter season.

Photo by Army Sgt. Tara Teel,  
Combined Joint Task Force-76 Public  
Affairs

Page 3: Small piece of American paradise found in Afghanistan

Page 4: Afghan Ministry of Interior reforms rank and pay structures

Page 5: Afghan National Army conducts major exercise in southern Afghanistan

Page 6: Qalat Provincial Reconstruction Team opens two new clinics

Page 8: Riding the Buffalo

Page 11: Duo keeps A-10 pilots safe

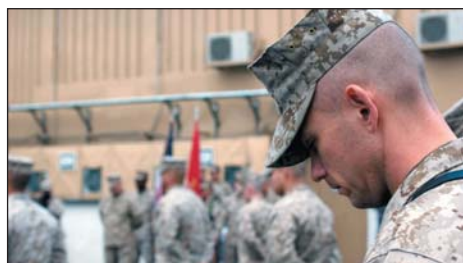
Page 12: Communicators lay foundation for future of Afghanistan

Page 14: Around the services

Page 15: USMC Birthday  
Photo page

(Cover) Army Pfc. Tony Frady, and engineer with the 18th Engineer Brigade, prepares to enter the top hatch of a mine protective clearance vehicle. The vehicle is referred to as the "Buffalo" due to its size and toughness.

Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Curtis Matsushige,  
Task Force Devil Public Affairs



## Afghanistan **Freedom** Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan **Watch**

*Freedom Watch* is the weekly publication of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan.

CFC-A Commander - Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry  
Public Affairs Officer - Col. James R. Yonts

*Freedom Watch*, an Army publication, is published each Monday by the 20th Public Affairs Detachment at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Printed circulation is 6,000 copies per week.

In accordance with AR-360-1, this Army newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military overseas.

Contents of the *Freedom Watch* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

Deadline for submissions is 0730 Zulu each Friday. All submissions are subject to editing by the 20th Public Affairs Detachment, located in Bldg. 425, Room 107, Bagram Airfield. We can be reached at DSN 318-231-3338.

### **Freedom Watch Staff**

Commander - Maj. T.G. Taylor  
NCOIC - Staff Sgt. Matthew MacRoberts  
Editor - Sgt. James-Denton Wyllie  
Journalists - Staff Sgt. Ken Denny  
Sgt. Douglas DeMaio, Spc. Jason Krawczyk  
Spc. Tiffany Evans, Pfc. Vincent Fusco

Visit the CFC-A Web site at  
[www.cfc-a.centcom.mil](http://www.cfc-a.centcom.mil)

Click on the *Freedom Watch* link in the features section to view the *Freedom Watch*. To be added to the weekly distribution list, e-mail [freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil](mailto:freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil)

# Piece of American Paradise found in Afghanistan

**By Army Spc. Laura Griffin**  
**Task Force Devil Public Affairs**

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE ANED, Afghanistan** - Land-locked Afghanistan, with its dry, mountainous, dusty climate, in no way resembles a tropical island. Yet reggae and Calypso music and that certain accent associated with small islands in the Caribbean can be heard drifting from one room in the concrete barracks here.

That room is the temporary home away from home for eight members of the 652nd Engineering Detachment, a reserve unit from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"It's the music, the reggae, Calypso and soka that keeps us close to home," said Army Spc. Dwight Dunwell, a heavy equipment operator with the unit, who was also deployed to Afghanistan in 2004 for Operation Enduring Freedom IV. "But I'm still not used to the cold here."

At an elevation of over 7,000 feet, FOB Aned is considerably cooler than St. Croix, one of the three islands that make up the Virgin Islands and home to seven of the eight 652nd Soldiers stationed at FOB Aned. The eighth lives on St. Thomas.

These eight engineers, along with a single attachment from Ohio, are at FOB Aned to help build new sloping roofs for the flat-roofed buildings that dot the base. This will help with drainage issues commonly associated with flat roofs and keep the winter snows from accumulating to dangerous levels.

Despite the extreme environment change, they're taking life here all in that same island stride.

"There's no beach and it's not green like

home, but I can't complain," said Army Sgt. Melvin Jeffers, an interior electrician with the unit who owns his own construction business back on St. Croix. "The work we do here reminds me of home. I spent my two weeks of leave framing the roof of my house," he said as he sat on one of the roof frames the group was working on.

The unit arrived in Afghanistan in February and has other members spread throughout eastern Afghanistan, with the majority of the unit stationed at Bagram Airfield. When the men at FOB Aned finish their work, they will return to Bagram to prepare for their return trip home, something they're all looking forward to.

"I'm looking forward to the winter," said Jeffers. "That means it is close to time to go home."

Army Spc. Tommy Bumbico, a carpenter attached to the unit who lives in Bellaire, Ohio, was recalled from his inactive ready-reserve status to serve in Afghanistan during OEF VI.

"When I was called up, I didn't know who I was being attached to," said Bumbico, who shares the barracks room with the Virgin Islanders at FOB Aned. "At first, it was hard to understand them because their accent is so different. It's kind of like Jamaican but not. Now I can understand them just fine."

"When I first found out that they were from the Virgin Islands, I was like, 'Is that even part of the United States?'" he recalled. "I was surprised when Chief Jones gave me the history."

The Virgin Islands are one of four territories of the United States.

"The United States bought the islands

from Denmark in 1917," said Army Chief Warrant Officer Dalton Jones, the officer in charge of the detachment. "The United States wanted to use the deep water ports for submarines to keep Germany from having clear access of that area."

"Now the Virgin Islands are called the 'American Paradise,'" he said. "These days tourism is the primary industry on the islands of St. Thomas and St. John. St. Croix is the largest of the three islands and manufacturing and refineries are its main industries. It has the largest oil refinery in the western hemisphere."

Living on a small tropical island is comparable to living in small town America in some ways. Most of the faces there are familiar to one another, but there are still a few surprises.

"Living on an island, most everybody knows everybody," said Army Spc. Hilroy Williams, an interior electrician with the unit.

"Yeah, but being on this deployment, you get to meet a lot of new interesting people, like Lionel," said Dunwell. Army Spc. Akimo Lionel is a carpenter in the unit. "We live on the same island but had never met before."

For Lionel, the greatest reminder of his small island home is the very voice with which he speaks.

"Our language is a little piece of home that we take with us everywhere," he said.

With their melodic rhythm and exotic inflections, their voices immediately conjure up images of sparkling, clear, blue-green water and a soft melody being played by a steel-drum band, warm ocean breezes and small fruity drinks with umbrellas.

## PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



UH-60 Blackhawks fly in formation over Bagram Airfield en-route to Kandahar International Airport as Army Capt. Josh Waddy leads his company on his final mission as commander of Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment. The company formed just months prior to their deployment to Afghanistan.

Photo by Army Sgt. Douglas DeMaio  
20th Public Affairs Detachment

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to [freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil](mailto:freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil). Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.



# Afghan Ministry of the Interior reforms rank, pay structures

**By Air Force Capt. Dave Huxsoll**  
Office of Security Cooperation-  
Afghanistan Public Affairs

**KABUL, Afghanistan** - Afghanistan's Ministry of the Interior is improving its ability to provide safety and security for the people of Afghanistan by dramatically rearranging its command structure.

With the assistance of the German Police Project Office and the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan, the MOI is reorganizing its rank and organizational structure and that of the Afghan National Police to produce a more efficient and streamlined force, with clearer chains of command and communication.

"We want to increase the capabilities of our force to create a secure environment for Afghan families, businesses and communities," said Yousuf Stanizai, MOI spokesman. "Having too many general officers undervalues the meaning of rank and can damage the discipline within an organization. This is something we want

to avoid."

Currently, the number of field-grade and general officers outnumber police sergeants by a ratio of almost 3-to-2. "There's a gross surplus of senior officers in the MOI and ANP, creating an almost reverse pyramid organization," explained Army Col. Paul Calbos, chief of OSC-A's Police Reform Directorate Ministry Reform Division. "By downsizing the number of these positions, the ministry will become a more organized, efficient and streamlined organization, with proper command and control."

The general-officer and field-grade ranks are being thinned in a three-phase process designed to select the most competent, qualified and honest officers for each position. The first phase involves the selection of the 31 highest ranking positions in the MOI and ANP.

A concurrent process of pay reform within the ANP will result in significant salary increases for almost all members of the police force. So although some mem-

bers may not maintain their current rank, if they remain on the force they will be making substantially more money, said Air Force Maj. Jeffrey DeJoannis, deputy chief in the PRD Ministry Reform Branch.

Selection of the "Top 31" is a four-step process, each step designed to further narrow down the field of officers. All of those interested in one of the 31 positions first had to submit an application. Next, a files-review transition board examined each candidate's education, variety and depth of experience, personal history and character.

The board consisted of seven senior officers from the MOI; Ambassador Rudolf Schmidt, formerly the German special representative for Afghan Security Sector Reform; and Ray Fitzgerald, director of OSC-A's PRD.

Next, each candidate was given a written exam to assess his knowledge of the law and legal procedures, his analytical abilities, management style and ethics.

**See Pay, page 11**

## Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week

**Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week:**  
**You are a good friend.**

**Dari**  
Shuma yak doste khoob hasted  
(Shoo-ma yak doe-stay khoob  
haus-ted)

**Pashtu**  
Tasoo yow khu malgeray yaste  
(Tah-soo yow khoo mal-gah-ray  
yaws tay)

## Afghan cultural tidbit

The two main languages spoken in Afghanistan are Dari and Pashtu. Dari, derived from "darbari," meaning the language of the court of kings, is spoken in the central, northern and western provinces of Afghanistan. Pashtu is spoken in the eastern, southern and southeastern provinces.

# Exercise Atal Wali: Afghan National Army conducts live-fire combat training in southern Afghanistan

**By Army Staff Sgt.**

**Jacob Caldwell**

**Task Force Devil Public Affairs**

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** - Afghan National Army soldiers participated in Exercise Atal Wali, a major training exercise, in southern Afghanistan recently.

The exercise included training designed for both soldiers on the ground conducting combat operations and for their leadership in the unit's headquarters.

The exercise was comprised of two parts. During the live-fire training portion, squads, companies and the battalion learned to fire their weapons in a coordinated manner. The second portion was the command post exercise in which the unit's command and staff reacted to different combat situations.

"We've created this training program to mirror the same rigorous standards and realism U.S. forces face at the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Germany prior to their deployment here," said Capt. Beau Garrett, a Combined Joint Task Force-76 operations officer. "This is the first time an Afghan National Army unit has been validated and we hope that they will take note of these training methods and continue to use them to train their forces."

So similar were the training standards to those faced by U.S. forces at CMTTC that professional observers/controllers were flown in for the exercise.

"This is an Afghan-led operation, their leaders will determine what areas the unit needs to focus on and what operations the units are already conducting at a proficient level," Garrett said. "The OCs

we've brought here for the mission are simply tools their commanders can use to take an impartial look at their operations. The OCs just watched the unit perform its mission. During and after the operation they facilitate discussions about how those missions were conducted and how they could be better conducted in the future.

"This training is not only tough and challenging. It's also realistic," Garrett said. "Many of the scenarios that will be presented to the command are based on actual operations and incidents here in Afghanistan. They are situations the Afghan command and staff will find themselves facing ... here they have the opportunity to re-look the decisions they made safely without the normal risks that are associated with today's modern battlefield."

## Enduring Voices

### What's the best way to avoid cold weather injuries?



**Marcus Matos, AAFES contractor**

*"Wear thick black socks, gloves, and Gore-Tex liner and jacket if needed."*



**Army Pfc. Justin Sikes, 690th Military Police Company**

*"Keep hydrated and stretch out, and maintain proper nutrition."*



**Navy Cmdr. Errol Henriques, Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan**

*"Wear heavy socks, protect the extremities, and wear lots of layers. Make sure it can breathe and not trap all of your sweat."*



**Marine Cpl. Charles Wallace, Task Force 165**

*"Remember COLD: keep it clean, keep from overheating, dress in layers, and stay dry."*





Marine Lt. Col. Andy Wilcox, the Qalat Provincial Reconstruction Team commander, and various local leaders from the Zabul area cut the ribbon on the new women's clinic.



# Qalat Provincial Reconstruction Team opens two new medical clinics

**By Army Spc.**

**Tiffany Evans**

**20th Public Affairs Detachment**

**ZABUL PROVINCE, Afghanistan** - Qalat Provincial Reconstruction team members donated two medical clinics to the different districts in Zabul Province recently.

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen attached to the PRT held an opening ceremony in the district of Mizan for one of the medical clinics Nov. 12.

"We donated the clinic in Mizan to Ibn Sina," said Army Capt. Roberta Smith, public affairs representative, 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion. "Ibn Sina will supply staff and monitor the daily operations of the clinic."

The clinic will support about 30,000 citizens once fully staffed and operational, said Smith. The first clinic opened Nov. 14 in the district of Shah Joy.

While the Mizan clinic is for

everyone, the target audience for the Shah Joy clinic is females.

"Shah Joy's women's clinic was donated to the Zabul Medical Director of Public Health and will be staffed by utilizing the existing doctors and nurses from the outdated health center," said Smith.

While at the Shah Joy clinic, Marine Lt. Col. Andy Wilcox, Qalat PRT commander, 3rd Marine Division gave a speech on the importance of opening new medical centers and updating the health system.

In Afghanistan, the average life span of women is less than that of men, said Wilcox.

"With the addition of new clinics and better access to health care we hope to increase the life spans of Afghans," said Wilcox.

Quality of life is very important to Afghans, said Wilcox. The Taliban destroyed schools and hospitals while in control of Afghanistan. The Coalition is doing its best to



**A mother and her two daughters wait to be seen at the old Shah Joy clinic that is right next to the new women's clinic, which opened Nov. 12.**

help build new ones.

"We are very thankful that the Coalition has donated us these new clinics," said Dr. Shah, Zabul Minister of Public Health.

"They are one way to help us win over the trust and hearts of the residents of Zabul Province."

Healthcare is now an easier

commodity to receive, said Shah. One-step at a time Afghanistan is rebuilding itself.

"I hope that in the future, Afghans and the Coalition will continue to have a successful partnership," said Shah. "Working together we are improving the quality of life for all of Afghanistan."



**Citizens from the Shah Joy District listen to speeches in honor of the opening of the new women's clinic.**



A mine protective clearance vehicle, or "Buffalo," stands ready to scoop-up explosive devices with the help of its 20-foot-long mechanical arm.



Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Matsushige



# Riding the Buffalo

## Army engineers use massive vehicles to clear roads of enemy ordnance

**By Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Curtis Matsushige  
Task Force Devil Public Affairs**

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE  
SALERNO, Afghanistan** - Considered the most mine-ridden country in the world, Afghanistan offers unique challenges to Army Reserve engineers whose job is to clear roads of deadly explosives.

To accomplish their mission and clear the way to safeguard Soldiers, these engineers have a special vehicle to help them with their job. Built tough, their mine protective clearance vehicle is fondly known as the Buffalo.

The Soldiers of A Company, 391st Combat Engineer Battalion, a reserve unit from Ashville, N.C., operate and maintain the Buffalo. They are operationally controlled by the 18th Engineer Brigade Forward, Task Force Sword, during their one-year deployment.

"We call this one (vehicle) the 'water buffalo' though it can't swim," said Army Pfc. Erick Risher, a combat engineer and mechanic with the 18th EBF, TF Sword. "One Soldier found that out the hard way after driving it almost window deep into water."

Luckily for the driver he was able to drive the Buffalo out of his self-imposed water trap under its own power, said Risher.

To give a feeling of the Buffalo's size, it takes an 8-foot ladder to get onboard the 26-ton armor and steel beast. It rides on 5-foot diameter tires. The entry ladder is built onto the Buffalo, but its operators have learned how to

mount the vehicle from both sides and the front.

One unique feature of this mammoth machine is three built-in cameras providing the operators views of the vehicle's surroundings while they remain safely inside.

"Being way up here, it's good to know if there's something in the back or in front of you," said Army Sgt. Tony Laws, 18th EBF, TF Sword. "It would be a tough job to pry off a civilian car from under the front chassis."

Another curious looking feature is a large folded cryptic appendage on the passenger-side of the vehicle.

"We call it 'the arm,'" said Buffalo driver, Army Sgt. Josh O'Conner, 18th EBF, TF Sword. He manipulates and controls the robotic arm to extend a 20-foot-long tentacle. It takes skill and dexterity to manipulate the powerful steel appendage to probe for mines and bombs while inside the Buffalo's protective armored hide.

"(The arm) interrogates a suspected explosive device," said O'Conner.

"Most of the explosives we find get detonated on the spot."

O'Conner demonstrated his ability to manipulate the arm by detecting, extracting and scooping-up a dummy improvised explosive device.

A powerful truck engine provides muscle to move the Buffalo around the roads of Afghanistan.

The Buffalo is yet another piece of equipment that helps ensure the safety of Soldiers and Afghans alike.



# Buffalo Soldiers

Army Sgts. Tony Laws (left) and Josh O'Conner of A Company, 391st Combat Engineer Battalion, adjust a camera lens on their mine protective clearance vehicle, also called a "Buffalo."

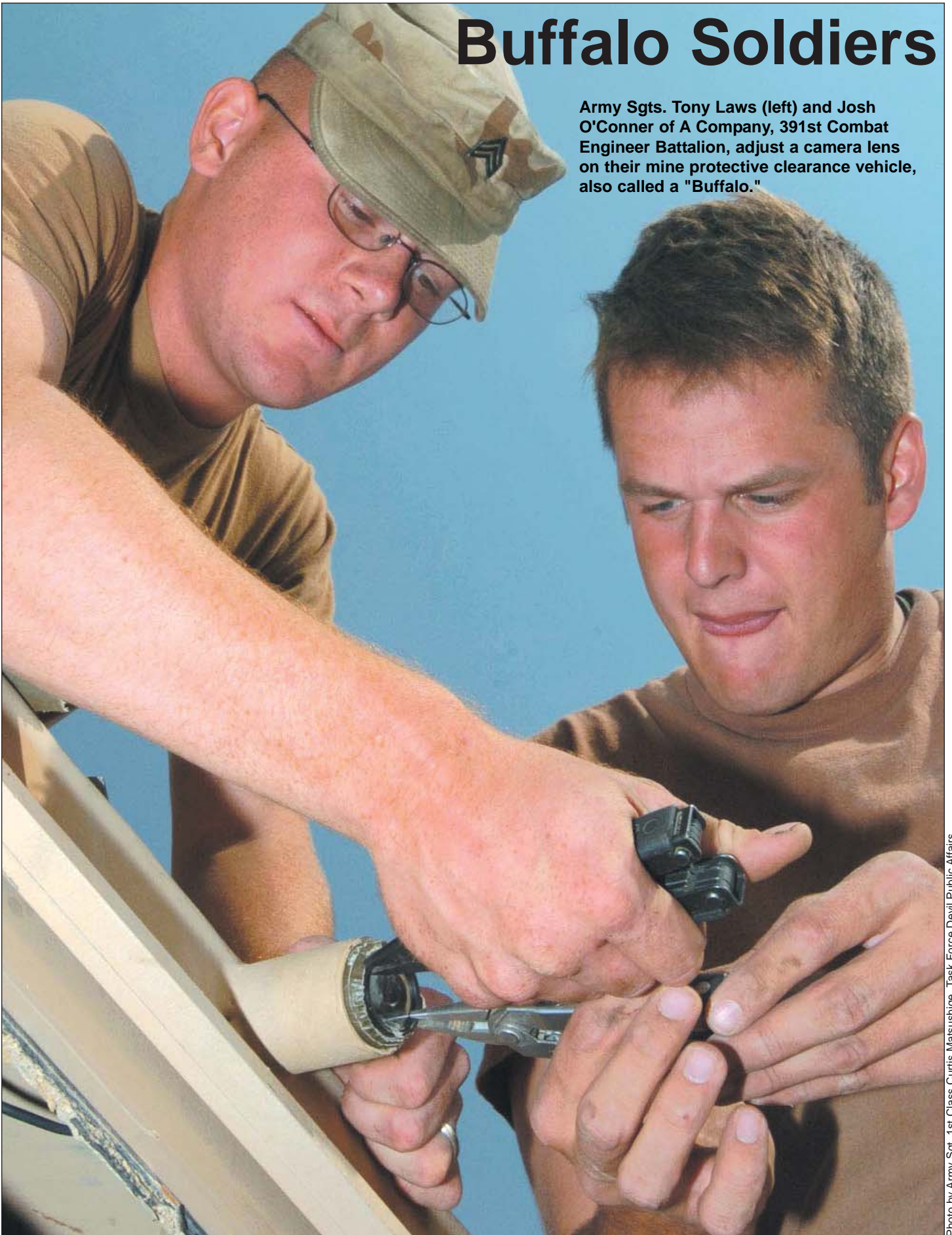


Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Matsushige, Task Force Devil Public Affairs



# Duo keeps A-10 pilots safe

**By Air Force Staff Sgt. Marcus McDonald**  
**455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs**

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** - From initial review to final inspection, a survival equipment duo here is helping to keep A-10 pilots safe and secure as they fly close-air support missions as part of the ongoing Global War on Terrorism.

Whether assembling an anti-G suit, parachute or survival vest, Staff Sgt. Andrew Topor and Senior Airman Adam Hatch, both deployed from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., have a reputation of weaving together excellence.

"If we've done our job correctly, A-10 aircrews can step into the cockpit, conduct their mission and return home safely," said Topor, survival equipment supervisor/rigger, 455th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

"We don't get to see if the maintenance we do on the equipment works out or not, and if we do, that means something went wrong," said Topor, a native of Columbus, Ga. "But if something were to happen, knowing that they made it to the ground safely because of the work we do gives us a sense of accomplishment; we saved a life."

Hatch, survival equipment technician/rigger, said he enjoys doing what he's paid to do and is glad to serve his country during a time of war.

"This job, like any other, is truly what you make of it," said Hatch, a native of Woodsville, N.H.

"It's extremely rewarding to know we are a vital part of making a successful mission happen.

"Regardless of how difficult it is at times, it is an honor and a privilege to serve and do my small part to complete the mission and return home safely," he continued.

"This is an experience to be proud of and one I will certainly carry with me always."

Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Marcus McDonald



**Air Force Senior Airman Adam Hatch, survival equipment technician/rigger, marks a piece of material in preparation for a protective engine cover. Hatch is helping keep A-10 pilots here safe and secure as they fly close-air support missions as part of the ongoing Global War on Terrorism.**

## From Pay, page 4

Finally, the remaining candidates were interviewed by members of a selection board consisting of Interim Minister of the Interior Zabar Ahmad Moqbil, MOI chief of staff Lt. Gen. Sayed Mohammad Qudussi, special advisor to the MOI Gen. Ghulam Ghawh Naseri, Schmidt and Fitzgerald. The board then made three recommendations for each of the 31 positions.

Moqbil made the final selections based on recommendations from the board and forwarded the list to Afghan President Hamid Karzai for final approval. An announcement of the MOI's "Top 31" is expected soon.

Selection of the "Top 31" was executed

over a two-month period, and all general officers from one-star to three were able to compete for these leadership positions. "The process was carefully managed to ensure fairness and impartiality," said Air Force Lt. Col. Ernie Martinez, PRD Ministry Reform Branch chief.

The second phase of rank reform will select 86 remaining general-officer positions. This process will closely mirror the first-phase selection process, with applications, interviews, file reviews and exams. This phase will be more decentralized than the first, however, with MOI and ANP leadership traveling to regions throughout Afghanistan to meet with the applicants.

"It's very important for the newly-

appointed leadership to travel out to the regions and provinces to put a face on the Afghan police reform and to promote the process to the entire country," said Martinez. "They will be critical in the selection process since the generals they select will be responsible for the operations under their command and ultimately, the success of the entire reform process."

The third and final phase will select personnel for the ranks of samunyar (major) through samunwai (colonel).

"These are important reforms that will ensure that the highest-qualified police officers meet the highest standards," Stanizai said.



Air Force Staff Sgt. Jeremy Bellard, (left) and Air Force Senior Airman Jeffrey Shipley, both computer communications systems operators, 451st Air Expeditionary Group Support Communications Section, dig a ditch for relocating 2,400 feet of radar fiber, computer and phone cable.



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Marcus McDonald, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs



# Communicators lay foundation for future of Afghanistan

**By Air Force Capt. James Cunningham**  
**455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs**

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - As U.S. forces prepare to return control of the airport terminal and tower to Afghan control, combat communicators assigned to 451st Air Expeditionary Group communications flight here recently stepped up and out of their lanes to provide critical communications.

When a short-suspense installation project could not be staffed by an engineering and installation team, the flight took the challenge of installing more than a mile of copper and fiber cabling head-on. The communications flight began the work of re-routing more than 6,000 feet of communication lines to ensure connectivity wasn't lost during the changeover.

The project involved running the wiring through conduit and burying it in trenches. The project has also left room for additional cables for expansion in the future. "We were able to get the process started to make sure no capabilities were lost," said Capt. Paul Perron, 451st AEG Communications Flight commander, deployed here from the 236th Combat Communications Squadron in Hammond, La. "They've picked up the ball and run with it like you wouldn't believe."

For the flight of less than 20 Airmen, charged with maintaining network communications for the Air Force personnel and missions here, innovation has become a way of life.

Improvements have spread to other areas of communication. Local communicators again stepped up to the challenge to complete a project to increase coverage of the land mobile radio service on the base. The project involved installing 15 repeaters, testing them and then programming around 300 receivers to work with the new system.

"We basically read the books on how to do it and learned as we went," said Tech. Sgt. Keith Sedwick, LMR manager for the 451st AEG Communications Flight, deployed here from the 33rd Combat Communications Squadron at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla. "I always want to leave a place better than I found it to make it easier for whoever comes after us."

The effort saved a special three-man team from Qatar five days of work.

"It's inspiring to know that what we're doing, in the long run, will make it a whole lot better here than it has been in a long time," said Master Sgt. Richard Poole, deployed from the 223rd Combat Communications Squadron in Hot Springs, Ark.

Other improvements have also been made. Communicators devised a way to increase the network's bandwidth capability 10 fold by upgrading and installing enhanced network switches.

"This has allowed us to have fewer network problems and

better support the mission," said Staff Sgt. Jeremy Bellard, 451st AEG Communications Flight's NCOIC of network management, deployed from the 236th Combat Communications Squadron in Hammond, La.

Improving systems here, especially those used by operators, has a direct impact on the mission.

"Losing communication here can literally mean life and death to the people we're supporting," said Sergeant Bellard.

As Afghanistan begins to take more control, Airmen here are planning on making a lasting impact in the Global War on Terror.

"This isn't about making temporary changes," said Col. Gerald E. Szpila, 451st AEG commander. "We're taking a long-term approach and making improvements that will last well beyond our AEF cycle. The results will benefit not only the rotations to come, but will also lay a foundation for a better Afghanistan



**Air Force Staff Sgt. Jeremy Bellard, computer communications systems operator, 451st Air Expeditionary Group Support Communications Section, programs an Internet switch to prepare for the relocation of personnel from the Kandahar Air Mobility Command passenger terminal and air operations center.**

Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Marcus McDonald, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

# Air Force major takes on cancer step by step

By Carolyn Lyon

Air Force Security Forces Center

**OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb.** - Doctors diagnosed Air Force Maj. Michael Moyles with oligoastrocytoma, a type of brain cancer, Dec. 9, 1999, and gave him six years to live.

Today, the major, a commercial satellite communications operational manager at U.S. Strategic Command here, is alive -- and beating cancer one step at a time.

"You never know what tomorrow is going to hold," said Moyles. "I was in the lowest risk group on the planet and at the age of 27 I was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer."

Before cancer, life for Moyles couldn't have been better. He had just proposed to his girlfriend of four years, was going to be a flight commander and was selected for reassignment.

"Every thing was perfect," he said. "Life was set."

Then, by accident, he discovered his life would never be the same.

"I was knocked out during a basketball game," Moyles said. "It was just a fluke accident -- two guys running into each other -- and I lost consciousness."

The Air Force requires any person who loses consciousness to receive a computed tomography, or CT scan. While checking for hemorrhaging, the doctors found what looked like a golf ball-sized tumor on Moyles' right frontal lobe.

After a year of observation, doctors determined the tumor was life-threatening and elected to perform surgery.

"I was probably less affected by it than my family," Moyles said. "You hear the term brain cancer and you think it's a death sentence. But I was pretty determined to not let that be the case."

The news of his cancer was the beginning of a battle to beat the disease and not become a statistic.

"To me, it was just another challenge to overcome -- like anything else," he said. "For oligoastrocytoma patients, the average survival rate is six to eight years. I'm at year six. So statistics would tell you I have one to two years left."

But Moyles is beating the statistics across

the board.

After successfully completing surgery and overcoming the associated fatigue, he went before an Air Force medical board to determine if he was fit to return to duty.

"After the first surgery, the work was to prove to them that this condition was not chronic or debilitating," Moyles said. "Those were the two words that would have pretty much been a career killer."

Moyles' condition was neither. After a green light from the board, he set out to ensure there would be no further questioning of his abilities.

"After I fully recovered from surgery, it became a matter of putting myself in the position where I am best equipped to beat what is, for most people, a death sentence," the major said. "I changed my diet, the number of days I worked out and how I worked out."

It was then that Moyles was approached by his coworker, Marine Maj. Steve Barriger, a global broadcast service satellite operational manager. Barriger invited Moyles to participate in a triathlon as his partner.

"We did that event, and did pretty well," Barriger said.

From then on, Moyles was hooked. The event was just what he needed to keep in peak shape. He and Barriger continued to compete in triathlons and dualathlons until the winter of 2004.

"We'd already been talking about running a marathon and what dualathlons and triathlons we wanted to do that summer," Barriger said. "Then he found out his brain tumor was back."

The major had been in remission for four years with no sign of any cancer.

"Then, in January of 2005, it came back and it came back very aggressively," Moyles said.

He went back into surgery April 28, 2005, and had another more aggressive, faster growing, larger tumor removed. This time, doctors also elected to perform 12 rounds of chemotherapy.

When Lance Armstrong announced he would be riding his seventh, and final, Tour de France to benefit the Lance Armstrong Foundation, Moyles was still in the hospital recovering from surgery.

"There was a lot of inspiration there, seeing what he was doing and I thought there's no reason why I can't do something similar," he said. "I can't ride the Tour de France, but I can do a marathon and pledge every mile of the 26.2 miles to raising money for brain-cancer research and brain-cancer awareness."

He began taking pledges -- while still in the hospital -- from nurses, doctors, friends and family.

"I couldn't even walk yet and I was already planning to run a marathon," he said.

Moyles was released after spending only two days in the hospital. Less than six weeks later, he and Barriger were competing together in a dualathlon.

"I told him before he went to his surgery that if he wanted to do it to let me know and I'd run side by side with him," Barriger said. "We did the event and he was running 8-minute miles."

Back on track and ready to go, Moyles began a rigorous 18-week training schedule to prepare for a marathon in Spokane, Wash.

"That's where my parents retired with my family," Moyles said. "That's where I would get the family support -- where they would be able to be a part of it -- and meet me at the finish line."

On the morning of Oct. 16, Moyles and two of his training partners, a master sergeant and a high school friend, set out with 96 others to complete in the Spokane Marathon. His wife, Angela, met him at the halfway point. She paced him through the second half of the marathon.

"He was feeling pretty good through miles 13 to 23, so he kept trying to speed up," she said. "I knew toward the end it was going to be rougher on him, so I had to keep slowing him down a bit."

Those last miles were tough to finish.

"For those last three miles, it wasn't getting three more miles done, it was getting another 100 yards. It was getting 50 feet. Around the next corner or up this hill," Moyles said. "I was running 23 miles physically and the last three miles mentally."

Moyles and his wife crossed the finish line at 4:49:48 to the cheers of family and friends.





Military and civilian personnel gather at Camp Eggers to celebrate the Marine Corps' 230th birthday Nov. 10th.

# Celebrating the Corps

Military and civilian personnel throughout Afghanistan recognized the United States Marine Corps' 230th birthday Nov. 10th. At Camp Eggers, Marines took part in a traditional cake cutting ceremony involving the youngest, oldest and senior ranking Marine on Camp Eggers.



(Above) Marine Lt. Col. Donald Modder, chief of future operations for Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, lowers his head in memory of fallen Marines during a ceremony celebrating the Marine Corps' birthday.

(Left) Marine Sgt. Joseph R. Justice, a Marine security guard with the U.S. Embassy, presents a bayonet to cut a cake honoring the Marine Corps' 230th birthday. The first pieces of cake were eaten by the senior ranking Marine, Col. Clayton T. Wright, the oldest Marine, Col. John D. Reardon and the youngest Marine, Lance Cpl. Brendon M. Coutts.



*Freedom Watch*  
*November 28, 2005*

**"I hate war as only a  
soldier who has lived it  
can, only as one who  
has seen its brutality, its  
futility and its stupidity."**

**General Dwight D. Eisenhower**